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The case of a Danish pesticide company in Brazil

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Environmental management in transnational product chains: the case of a Danish pesticide company in Brazil

Michael Soegaard Joergensen, Bruno Milanez and Marcelo Firpo

Transnational product chains involving industrialized countries and developing or newly industrialised countries is the background for new systems of international regulation like Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and corporate self regulation based on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental standards. Such regulation and management systems are reactions to critic of the practice of transnational companies from industrialized countries in developing countries or countries under transition of not taking the same environmental and health precaution as in the country of the headquarter of the company. Standards and schemes like ISO14001 and Responsible Care are at the same time criticized for being weak in the demands to the companies and thereby indirect allowing double standards with respect to protection of health and environment in different contexts. The paper analyses the shaping of the environmental strategy and environmental impacts connected to the practice of a Danish transnational pesticide company in Brazil and how this practice is shaped in interaction between the business strategy and the Brazilian society. The company is certified in relation to ISO14001 and refer to CSR principles as management principle. The analyses show a corporate practice based on information to farmers and cancellation of the sale of pesticides to some parts of Brazil. However, the Brazilian part of the company has also participated in pressurising Brazilian governmental agencies against an improvement of the Brazilian legislation towards European standards. The paper applies an analytical framework based on theories concerning business ethics, environmental management in transnational product chains, corporate translation of external pressures through the historically developed structures and incentives in a company, vulnerable contexts and their ability to handle local risk situations and Actor Network Theory and the concept of script for characterising the complexity of practice in relation to products, including the difference between the envisioned practice and the actual practice.